



LARRY-MAESTRO WHO DEFIES THE YEARS

FOR SHEER dependability few players can match U's evergreen midfielder Larry Pritchard, writes TONY REED.

Colleagues, opponents and fans alike have come to rely on nothing less than 100 per cent commitment, allied to, with few exceptions, a high level of technical skill.

Can Pritchard, nudging 37, go on defying the years? It seems unlikely but there are several points in his favour.

Firstly he still, by all accounts, retains a schoolboy enthusiasm for the game; and physically, he's in the durable mould of some of the great midfielders of former years, such as Bobby Collins and Johnny Giles, or more recently Archie Gemmill.

Pritchard's quick, darting runs, generally accurate distribution and thoughtful reading of the game make him as much a star at non-League level, as those three were in the higher plain of the Football League.

However long Pritchard goes on for and, as he says, "I'll know when it's

time to quit. No doubt there will be plenty of people ready to tell me when the time comes," U's have, and rightly so, decided to mark his 20 years in the non-League game with a testimonial this season.

Testimonial brochure

It's already in full swing. There's been an opening dinner and dance in August and a "Larry Pritchard Week" in November, which included a Stag Night, Race Night and a dance.

Now a testimonial brochure has been produced by players Dave Collyer and John Rains, Simon Clennell, the Svengali behind the excellent Sutton match programme, and Bruce Elliott.

Unfortunately most of the guest writers in the brochure fall into the trap of using all the old clichés. "Legend in his own life-time", "player's player", "most complete all-round player", etc, etc but Pritchard, no doubt, will keep it all in perspective.

His playing ability has never been

in any doubt and possibly the most telling comments came from Charlie Hughes, manager of the England and Great Britain international teams, in which Pritchard picked up all his caps.

"Larry was a marvellous ambassador for his country and he was never less than correct in his attitude to playing, training, appearance and conduct.

"He never questioned a decision on the field nor resorted to any mean tricks. There are no statistics which will measure the immense amount of good Larry has done for football, by the influence he had on so many young players."

The booklet is packed with enough facts and figures on Pritchard's career to satisfy the most demanding U's fan and wife Janice gives an account of the family viewpoint.

Copies are available from the club shop or from Bruce Elliott, 79 Sunny-mede Avenue, West Ewell, Epsom. It costs 50p and please add 15p to cover postage and packing. All proceeds go to Larry's fund.